

COUNCIL

18 JULY 2018

Surplus Student HMOs in Ormskirk - Motion

AMENDMENT BY COUNCILLOR FORSHAW

That this Council notes that there is currently a significant surplus of student HMOs in Ormskirk, with 69 properties, comprising 334 rooms, currently available for the 2018/19 academic year on one website alone on 4 July 2018, with at least nine of these properties being currently advertised for sale on the same website.

That it be further noted that the hard work of this Labour administration has contributed significantly to reducing the demand for student HMOs in Ormskirk, by supporting Edge Hill University to build on campus; and, since 2015, by the Council refusing far more applications for HMO conversions than have been approved. Over four hundred HMO applications were permitted prior to 2015 but under this administration, only four have been approved. Coupled with a national demographic fall in student numbers, this approach now means that many private landlords are left with vacant properties.

That the Director of Housing and Inclusion be asked to report to Cabinet, and Council if appropriate, to look into the viability of a scheme to offer guaranteed, short-term loans, along with other professional services and support, to landlords wishing to convert HMO properties back to a suitable state for sale as family occupation either through the council directly or via the new development company, as is deemed most appropriate.

A charge would be applied to such properties, which, when sold, would be reclaimed in full by the council. Upon sale, properties would have to be returned to private ownership and non-HMO status.

Such a scheme would create little risk for the council, as the loans would be repaid in full on sale of the property and it would not be required to take on ageing housing stock in order to bail out struggling private landlords.

The scheme would also generate increased council tax receipts and help increase the number of affordable properties, in conjunction with the council's plans to create more affordable housing stock through its proposed development company.